

RECLAMATION DISTRICT No. 551
PEARSON DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 123
WALNUT GROVE, CA 95690 (916) 776-2544

July 18, 2011

Delta Stewardship Council
deltaplancomment@deltacouncil.ca.gov

Re: Comments on Fourth Draft of Delta Plan (Subventions Legislation)

Dear Council Members,

As you know, the levees in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta are currently maintained by local districts using funds raised from local landowners, and reimbursed, in part, by the State. This State support, or subventions, program is premised upon the fact that flood control in the Delta is of statewide importance: by enabling continuation of the regional economy, assuring the integrity of transportation infrastructure, protecting a growing recreational usage, securing safe water conveyance, and safeguarding a complex network of riparian habitat. The subventions program is absolutely critical for the continued operation and maintenance of levees across the Delta, and its effectiveness and need are exemplified by the levees in the Pearson District, maintained by Reclamation District No. 551 (District).

The District protects 8,537 acres of land, most of it in farming. The importance of protecting this vital agricultural resource cannot be overstated. It is the backbone of our local economy and has been the primary way of living in this area for more than 130 years, and will be for the foreseeable future. The District also protects the homes and lives of the hundreds of people who live in and around the town of Courtland, a vital Delta community that is a valuable asset to understanding and experiencing the history of Delta settlement and development.

The subventions program is an extremely cost effective way to maintain the Pearson District levees, which include some of the strongest in the Delta. The District is run on a tight budget by an elected Board of Trustees who know every foot of the levees and are continuously monitoring their condition and planning for future repairs and improvements. No other State flood control spending accomplishes as much, per dollar of investment, than subventions money. This support enables the District to accomplish almost four times as much physical work on the levees each year as it could with strictly local funding. As a result of the program, the District's levees have been significantly improved since the program was begun in 1973, and there has not been a single levee break since then. It will be imperative to continue these efforts as the District prepares for the predicted increasing variability in storm events and sea level rise.

Unfortunately, the current Delta Levee Maintenance Program, provided in Water Code Section 12986, is set to expire on July 1, 2013, unless extended by the Legislature. The Legislature is looking to the Delta Stewardship Council for a recommendation on whether to continue the program in its current state. The District urges you to modify Section 7 of the Delta Plan to endorse making this crucial program permanent.

Thank you for your attention to these comments.

Very truly yours,

Topper Van Loben Sels
President, Board of Trustees

Douglas Chan
Secretary, Board of Trustees

Kurt Jonson
Member, Board of Trustees

cc: Gilbert Cosio, District Engineer, MBK Engineers
 Michael Moncrief, MBK Engineers
 Joseph Schofield, District Counsel, Downey Brand LLP